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News Release ~ Communiqué

1995 fees for national parks and national historic sites

OTTAWA, APRIL 5, 1995 - The Department of Canadian Heritage today announced the 1995-96 operating season fees to be charged at National Parks, National Historic Sites and Historic Canals across the country.

Parks Canada consulted with Canadians on fees charged at national parks, national historic sites and canals since last summer. The consultations had three fundamental objectives:

to ensure that those receiving services are paying an amount that is fair and appropriate for the services received;

to ensure that Canadians are receiving fair market value for rentals of assets in the parks and sites; and

to ensure that commercial operations within national parks and national historic sites are firmly established on a no-subsidy basis.

Entrance/access fees, to be charged on a per person basis, range between \$2.00 to \$7.50 (including GST) per adult per day, with reduced rates for seniors and children. These are packaged in ways that are sensitive to the needs of visitors. The average daily fee per person at most parks and sites is \$3.

Visitors to the parks and sites should pay a fair and equitable share of the cost for the personal services they receive. Canadians as a whole, through their taxes, pay for the cost of having, establishing and protecting national parks and national historic sites.

Concurrent with the announcement of fees for the 1995-96 operating season, Parks Canada re-affirms its commitment to respond to visitor needs while introducing further efficiencies in its operations. As well, Parks Canada will continue public consultations on a variety of issues, including cost recovery fees, realty charges and subsidies to commercial operations.

Information on Parks Canada's 1995 fees is attached. Backgrounders listing fees applicable to various services in specific parks and sites are available through the regional offices of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

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BACKGROUNDER

PARKS CANADA'S 1995 FEES

1. History

Fees have been charged in Canada's national systems of parks and historic sites since the 1880s, when land near Banff, Alberta was set aside for our first national park. Visitors were charged for access to the splendid thermal hot springs found there. Since then, additional fees have been introduced as new services were developed. Camping fees were first charged in 1890. Park Motor Licence fees were applied in 1911. (Single entry of a vehicle cost one dollar in 1912.) Fees for entry to National Historic Sites were introduced in 1969 and lockage fees at historic canals were first applied in the 1970s. Parks Canada also collects money for a large number of services, such as garbage collection and rents, that relate to the program's role as a property and community manager.

2. Public Consultations

Public consultation is a basic principle for the Government of Canada. Parks Canada has traditionally maintained ongoing dialogue with visitors, users and local communities. Intensive local consultations were carried out on the introduction of new and adjusted cost recovery fees in 1995, including per-person entry fees at national parks. Consultations have also taken place and continue, on financing of townsites, and fees and service levels on heritage canals.

Some 24,000 Canadians, representing the general public and key interest groups, were consulted. The consultations were done through a variety of mechanisms, including visitor surveys, comment cards, newsletters, bulletins, meetings and information sessions with the general public, tourism partners, local businesses and elected officials. It was found that a majority of Canadians accept the notion of new and adjusted cost recovery fees contingent on operations being as efficient as possible and as long as the fees are fair and affordable.

3. New National Fee Structure

Parks Canada has devised a new national cost recovery fee structure based on a per person entry fee. With the introduction of the entry fee, the Motor Vehicle License fee charged at national parks will be phased out. The basic principle which Parks Canada applied is to charge users for the services of personal benefit they receive -- such as camping -- while tax dollars pay for the cost of having and protecting national parks and national historic sites. The new fee schedule reflects market conditions, affordability, equity and national consistency.

4. National Parks

Starting in April 1995, 18 national parks across Canada will charge a per person entry fee (personal use fee). Fees will range between \$2.00 and \$3.74 plus GST per adult per day (25% less for seniors; 50% for children). Due to operational circumstances, eight national parks - Banff, Yoho, Jasper, Kootenay, Kouchibouguac, Cape Breton Highlands, Terra Nova and Fundy - will continue to collect a Park Motor Licence fee this year, and pursue implementation of the per person fee for April, 1996.

At the eight national parks that will continue to charge a Park Motor Licence this year, fees will range from \$5.61 to \$7.48 plus GST.

1995 is a transition year for Parks Canada's new fee structure. A pass that allows access to all national parks in Western Canada will be available. Plans call for a country-wide system pass to be available for the 1996 visitor season.

5. National Historic Sites

Also starting in April, 52 national historic sites administered by Parks Canada will collect fees ranging from \$1.87 to \$7.01 plus G.S.T. per adult per day (25% less for seniors; 50% less for children). Most historic sites will charge in the \$2.00 - \$3.00 range. Only the world-famous Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Site will charge the maximum fee of \$7.01 plus GST per person per day.

6. Heritage Canals

A comprehensive examination of all Heritage Canals was also undertaken to explore mechanisms to reduce costs and ways to increase the overall economic contribution the canals can make to the regions they serve. As announced last October, mooring and lockage fees in Ontario and Quebec will increase by 10% in 1995-1996. In addition, annual fees for canal system passes for use of the canals in Ontario and Quebec will be the same regardless of where they are purchased.

7. Other Fees

Fees for some guided tours, theatre shows, and other personal interpretation services will also be introduced for the first time this year. Examples include a \$1.00 guided tour fee at the Forks National Historic Site (Manitoba), a \$4.50 audio tour rental fee at Fort St. James National Historic Site (British Columbia), a \$1.50 educational program fee at Woodside House National Historic Site (Ontario), a \$10.00 Eco-Tour fee at Prince Albert National Park (Saskatchewan), and a \$7.00 guided hike fee at Mt. Revelstoke/Glacier National Parks (British Columbia). Recreational fees -- such as for camping and other services -- are also being adjusted this year.

8. Consultations Continuing

Consultations on property and realty charges, as well as levels of service in national park communities and at historic canals, will continue throughout 1995.

Consultations will also be continuing at the eight national parks which are maintaining the Park Motor License fee for 1995/96, with the goal to receive public input to allow new per person fees at those eight parks to be implemented in April 1996.

It is not Parks Canada's intention to have full cost recovery for all its services, particularly not for those which offer a public benefit in addition to a personal benefit. All pricing will continue to be fair, equitable and market-based. Fees will continue to change over time to reflect market realities and will be set in an open and transparent fashion. Visitors to parks and sites will be consulted before these changes take place.

9. Parks Canada's 1995-96 Budget

The budget for the Parks Canada program of the Department of Canadian Heritage for 1995-96 is \$326 million from parliamentary appropriations, plus \$39 million from expected revenues generated through the fees to be charged this year. Total revenues represent approximately 10.6 per cent of the total budget spent by the Parks program.

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